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HISTORICAL SKETCH

OF THE

First Baptist Church,

NEWPORT, R. I.

—BY—

C. E. BARROWS, PASTOR.

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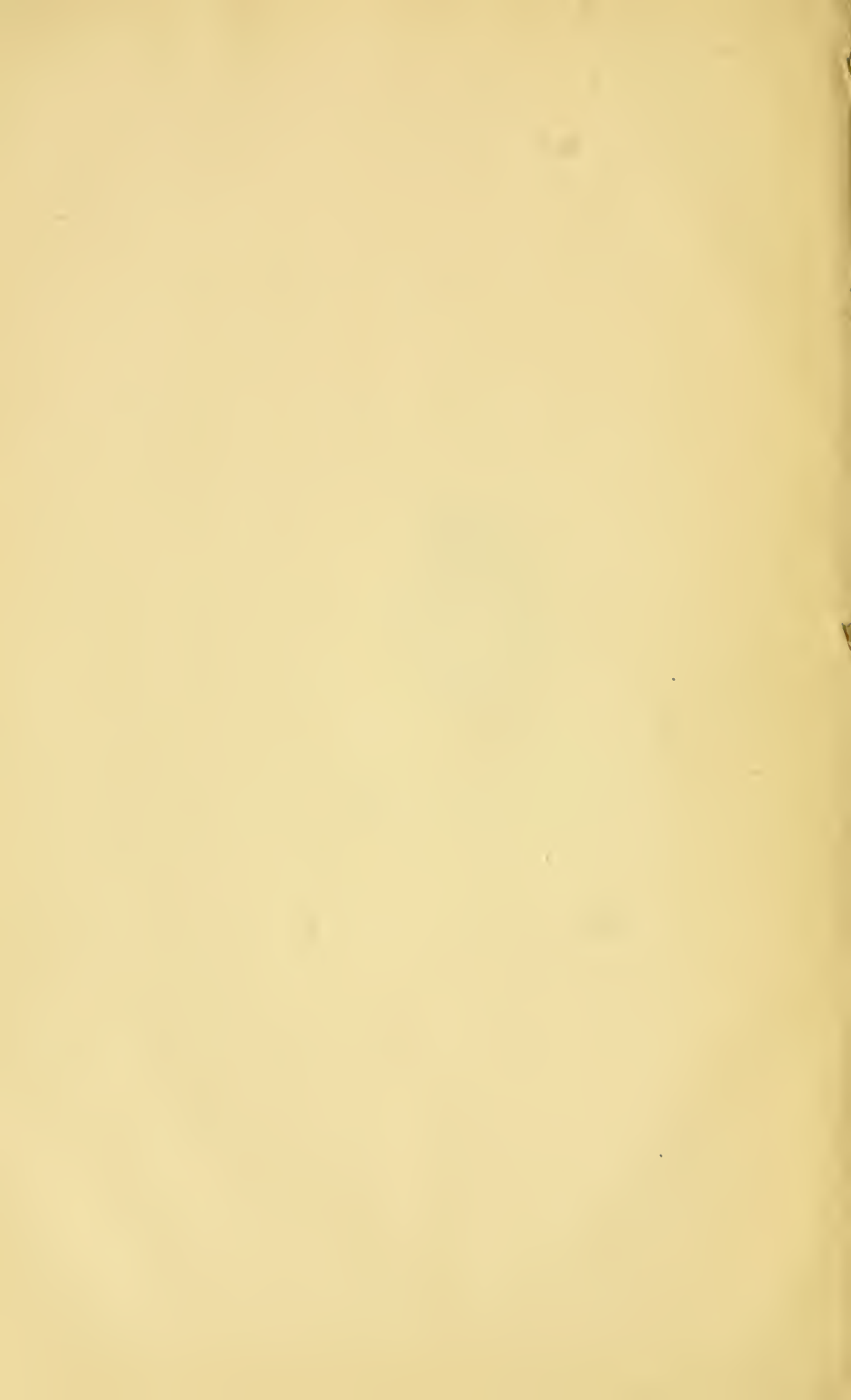




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HISTORY  
OF THE  
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

—IN—

NEWPORT, R. I.

A DISCOURSE

DELIVERED ON THANKSGIVING DAY,

November 30, 1876.

*Comment  
dwin* BY  
C. E. BARROWS,

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH.

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Published by request of the Church;

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NEWPORT:  
John P. Sanborn & Co., Printers, Mercury Printing House.  
1876.

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## DISCOURSE.

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PSALM CXLV. 4. *One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts.*

As announced on Sunday last, I propose to give you this morning an outline of the history of this church. We are assembled, I do not forget, according to a time honored custom, to offer the tribute of grateful hearts to the Supreme Ruler of nations and Disposer of events for the manifold gifts of his providence and his grace. He has, indeed, richly blessed us, as individuals, as families, and as a church, and richly blessed also our broad land. To him I would direct your thoughts to-day, as the source of all good. The fact should at this hour be deeply impressed upon our minds that his hand is guiding in all the complicated movements of earth, and may be discovered through all the past history of the world, timing the march of events in the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom among men. And he who is thus controlling and guiding the course of human history, does not forget or neglect the parts of which the whole is composed. The grand whole is ordered in infinite wisdom, because, as we are assured, the Lord condescends to the smallest details. So minute, indeed, is his superintendence, that not a sparrow falls to the ground without his notice. Surely he who cares for the most insignificant parts of his creation, who paints the

lilies of the field and feeds the birds of the air, will provide for those who have been made in his own image, and for whom his Son gave his life a ransom. The Lord fondly cherishes every disciple of his, and tenderly regards all his churches. He cares for each one of us, and for this church which his right hand planted, and which he has lovingly fostered through all the years of its eventful history. I am sure that I cannot do you a better service than to trace the way in which the Lord has led this people, and to recount what he did for our fathers, and what he enabled them to do for their respective generations and for the world.

It seems eminently fitting that on this Centennial year we should make such a review. This year is a memorable one in our country's history. During its months we have been compelled often to look back, almost to live in the past; our periodical literature—papers, magazines, reviews—has given much space to by-gone events; we are all more or less in what I may call a historical attitude. Our magnificent Exhibition, so recently closed, had a historical significance. There were gathered the marvellous products of the country, showing its unprecedented growth in material wealth. Discoveries in almost every branch of knowledge were displayed, and curious and useful inventions for reducing the amount of manual toil in the several departments of industry. There, too, at the Exposition, was afforded an opportunity to study the growth and present condition of the most important foreign countries, and to institute a kind of rough comparison between the different nationalities. The year is moreover being utilized still further for the purposes of history; there having been produced many local histories, histories of towns and cities, of educational progress and institutions, of military organizations, of churches of Christ and other religious societies.

Nor will we forget that this is an anniversary year in the calendar of this church, that this is the bicentenary of the death of its first pastor.

It is, nevertheless, only an outline of the history of the church that we can attempt in a single discourse. For it is a long period that we shall have to traverse. The history will lead us back through many generations. While the country is celebrating its one hundredth anniversary, and is recounting the exploits of men who have already receded into the shadowy past, we must go back to a remoter past, to a time before the revolution, before its patriots and heroes were born, even to the very beginnings of our country's life, when the New England colonies were being settled,—through a period of two centuries and a third. How greatly those times differed from the present in customs and manners, in laws and government, and in the general spirit that pervaded them! Let us remember that Charles I. was on the throne of England, that the Earl of Strafford was his prime minister, and that William Laud was Archbishop of Canterbury. The breach between the Court and the Parliament, already considerable, was rapidly widening. The government was becoming constantly more arbitrary and despotic. The king and his ministers were seeking to rule England without recourse to Parliament and in violation of Magna Charta and every constitutional safeguard of the rights of subjects. And there was meanwhile a growing discontent among the people, and a more determined resistance to the monstrous assumptions of the Crown. Men were taking a defiant attitude even toward the king, and were daring to assert their rights with a boldness unparalleled in English history.

But we should wholly fail to understand those times, if we took no notice of the religious condition of the country.

The politics of England were largely shaped by ecclesiastical considerations. It was the encroachment of government upon the domain of religion that awakened the strongest antagonisms. Conformity was the watchword of the zealous Laud. By increasing the rigors of ecclesiastical law, and punishing with severity the slightest deviation from his multiplied regulations, many of them deemed thoroughly papistical, the Archbishop called down upon himself, and upon his devoted *confreere*, the Earl of Strafford, and even upon Charles, his royal master, a terrible storm of popular indignation which swept them all from their places of power and sent them to an untimely death.

Among the opponents of the king were some in the Church of England, who thereby became Non Conformists. But the strength of the opposition came from the large body of Dissenters, already known as Puritans. The Puritans, who appeared with the Reformation under Henry, and had become numerous in the reign of James, were now a recognized power in the realm. While, however, a unit in their resistance to the encroachments of the Crown, upon other matters the Puritans were divided among themselves. The distinction which concerns us now, however, is that which appears in THE GROUND OF OPPOSITION to Laud, or in the reason assigned for repugnance to the ecclesiastical laws imposed by him. While groaning under the burdens of the Establishment—and the entire population of the kingdom was “considered to belong legally to the Church of England”—and while vigorously seeking to throw off from themselves this incubus, the great body of the Puritans did not discern the injustice of the principle of governmental interference with the religious faith of the people: they *only deplored what they conceived to be a misapplication* of the principle.

This was shown during the supremacy of the Presbyterians in England and Scotland, and during the early rule of the Congregationalists in New England. In his recent learned monograph, (1) Dr. Henry M. Dexter truthfully says: "The ancient idea was of one all-embracing, infallible and unchangeable church. And in England the Reformation had scarcely more than transferred that idea from the Pope's church to that of Henry VIII. And when our fathers dared to differ with that State church in matters of polity, they did so with the sincere belief that the government was right in its fundamental principles, only mistaken in their application; right in rigidly ruling with reference to spiritual things, only wrong in the data by which that rule was determined; right in compelling men as to their church polity, only wrong as to the kind of polity which was the object of such compulsion." These Puritans were not opposed to the principle of the union of church and state, if only the alliance were made with the true church—their own. The true church, it was claimed, and is even still claimed by some communities, has the right to enforce its laws—because they must be divine laws—with pains and penalties. And the only reason why this course is not pursued, is because the religious world is divided into so many different sects, and the true church is in the minority. Whereas the true church, though conscious that it is the true, apostolic church, has no such right given to it, has delegated to it no such authority. Its constitution and its work are both alike opposed to the thought. It can never make disciples by physical compulsion. It can never propagate its faith with a blade of steel. The church of Christ can employ only moral and spiritual means in doing its divinely given work.

1. *As to Roger Williams, and his 'banishment' from the Massachusetts Plantations, with a few further words concerning the Baptists, the Quakers, and Religious Liberty: A Monograph by Henry Martyn Dexter, D. D., etc.* Boston: Congregational Publishing Society. 1876. Pp. 108, 109.



Dr. Dexter might have testified further, that there were at the time of which he speaks, embraced under the general term of Puritan, those who *strenuously maintained that the principle of state compulsion in religion was wrong* and pernicious. The doctrine of religious liberty was at that time a distinctively Baptist doctrine, being considered by its opponents as dangerous as any tenet of Rome. Before the reign of Elizabeth, Baptists had spoken plainly in behalf of religious liberty. And their utterances became clearer and more emphatic until, eight years after the accession of James, this doctrine was boldly embodied in a confession of their faith. Subsequently, fuller confessions of this truth—though none more explicit—were given to the world. Let us remember that it was a quarter of a century after the issuing of their confession embracing an article on religious liberty and the sending forth of a tract containing a plea for liberty of conscience, that our fathers began to plant this island and to gather a church of Christ. But although these opinions had been ably advocated by a respectable body of Christians for so long a time, they made but slow progress and gained but comparatively few adherents. The English government meanwhile relaxed none of its severity, and the colonies in the New World were started upon the same principle of governmental interference in religious concerns, and were necessarily led into the same courses of persecution and spiritual oppression. From England our fathers had been driven to Massachusetts Bay, and from Massachusetts Bay they were again driven to these shores. Such in brief, was the general state of society, and such were some of the tendencies of religious thought in England, at the time when the men who formed this church were being trained for the difficult tasks to which Providence had called them.

It would be pleasant for us to set out on our historical survey from some definite date. We can, however, give neither the day, nor the month, nor even the year, when this church was organized. It will, however, I suppose, be incumbent upon me to say a few words on the subject; although I cannot solve the question, or indeed throw upon it any new light. I can do little more than state what evidence we have bearing upon the date, which may, perhaps, help us to approximate the truth.

John Comer, who lived about ninety years after the settlement of this island, was the first writer who sought to ascertain the date in question. He found a manuscript giving a list of the members of the church in 1648. But upon inquiry he found that the church was in existence as much earlier certainly as 1644. This is the minute preserved in the church book, as made by Mr. Comer: "Having found a private record of Mr. Samuel Hubbard, who was a member of this church, by which I find that this church was in being as long back as Oct. 12. 1648; but how long before justly by any manuscript I can't find, but by private information it was constituted about 1644." In a manuscript he left, said to be now in the possession of the Backus Historical Society, he repeats the statement that "the church was first gathered by Mr. Clarke about 1644." Callender, in his Century Sermon, cautiously states the matter thus: "It is said that in 1644 Mr. John Clarke and some others formed a church on the scheme and principles of the Baptists." The researches of Backus inclined him to adopt an earlier date as the probable one. In his history he says, "The first Baptist church, we are told, was formed and set in order about the year 1644, under the ministry of Mr. John Clarke," adding, in a note, that the date "appears as likely to be earlier as later than

that time." There are some circumstances which strongly favor the opinion that the church was formed during the very first year of the settlement of the island.

We certainly know that Mr. Clarke was a preacher on the island from the beginning. We know that at the very outset a church was formed; that this church disfellowshipped the church in Boston, with which most of its members had been connected; that letters from that church were returned unacknowledged, and messengers thence were refused a hearing. The treatment received in Boston had left few pleasant memories of the old church, and was destined to work still more radical changes in most of the planters. A Congregationalist minister who had been a fellow sufferer with them, and had shared some of their convictions, but not all of them, seems at first to have been expected here; but he never came. And "in the meanwhile Mr. John Clarke, who was a man of letters, carried on public worship." Viewed as religious men, the early planters may perhaps be divided into three classes. There were, first, those who came as Baptists from England; secondly, those who while connected with Mr. Cotton's church in Boston were Baptists in sentiment; and thirdly, those who though not Baptists were in a transition state. Gov. Winthrop mentions the fact that in 1640-41 there were "professed Anabaptists" on the island. Some have supposed this to be the date of the organization of the church—the present church arising from the ashes of the former. A certain Mr. Lechford, in a rapid survey of the New England colonies in the year 1640, found the Rhode Island colony in a very wretched state indeed religiously. What churches there were had all gone to pieces. In a small book, whose address "to the reader" is dated Jan. 1641, he says: (1) "At the island called Aquedney are about two hun-

1. *Plain Dealing*, Trumbull's edition, p. 93.



dred families. There was a church where one master Clarke was Elder. The place where the church was, is called Newport, but the church, I hear, is now dissolved; as also divers churches in the country have been broken up and dissolved through dissention. (1) At the other end of the island there is another town called Portsmouth, but no church; there is a meeting of some men, who there teach one another, and call it prophecy." "At Providence, which is twenty miles from the said island, lives master Williams, and his company of divers opinions: most are Anabaptists; they hold there is no true visible church in the Bay, nor in the world; nor any true ministry."

But while the date of its origin is veiled in obscurity, there is no uncertainty as to its first minister. And here it is worthy of remark, and is perhaps without parallel in the history of churches, that during the entire period of its existence this church has had but fourteen pastors. We mention this permanency in the pastoral relation as a fact somewhat remarkable, not to express an opinion on the question whether long or short pastorates are the better for a church. It may perhaps be doubted, however, whether this church would, on the whole, have been better served by a more frequent change. If attended with some disadvantages, this stability in the pastoral office has had for the church its compensations.

First in the list of pastors stands the name of JOHN CLARKE, who, according to a record in an old family Bible said to be still in existence, (2) was one of seven children.

1. The Massachusetts Historical Society possesses a manuscript copy of a part of *Plain Dealing*, "written prior to the printed copy", and differing from it in some material points. In this older manuscript, the sentence given in the text reads as follows: "At the Island called *Aquedney*, are about one hundred families. There is a church, where one master Clarke is Pastor.... The place where the church is, is called *New porte*." The words, "But that church.... through dissention," are not in the Mass. Hist. Soc. Ms., where the sentence ends with "*Newport*." Note by the Editor, Hon. J. H. Trumbull.

2. Bækus, *History*, Weston's edition, l. 348.

and was born Oct. 8, 1609, in Suffolk, England. Another tradition makes him a native of Bedfordshire, the birthplace of his first wife. He was an educated man, although at what university he was matriculated is not known. He was undoubtedly a Christian and a Baptist before leaving England. Certainly when he reached the New World his religious convictions differed from those of the Puritans of Massachusetts, and his views of religious liberty were already very mature, in harmony with the doctrine of Baptists on the subject. When he arrived at Boston in November, 1637, the Antinomian controversy, which had thrown the town into the greatest excitement, was approaching its culmination, and several of the Antinomian leaders were just on the eve of being banished from the colony. Although not entangled in this bitter controversy, Mr. Clarke determined at once to leave, and led a movement for colonizing. (1) In March, 1638, he with his friends settled on this island. While almost continuously busy in laying the foundations of the future commonwealth, we find that he at once made religious service a paramount duty. He was engaged in preaching from the beginning, and until the coming of ROBERT LENTHALL, who was admitted a freeman here Aug. 20, 1640. Mr. Lenthall had been accused, two years before, at Weymouth, in the Massachusetts colony, of "Antinomian and Anabaptistical errors." "From the former," says Winthrop, (2) "he was soon taken off upon conference with Mr.

1. He says: "In the year 37 I left my native land, and in the ninth month of the same, I (through mercy) arrived at Boston; I was no sooner on shore, but there appeared to me differences among them touching the Covenants, and in point of evidencing a man's good estate; some prest hard for the Covenant of works, . . . others prest as hard for the Covenant of grace. . . . I thought it not strange to see men differ about matters of heaven, for I expect no less upon earth. But [sad it was] to see that they were not able so to bear with each other in their different understandings and consciences, as in those utmost parts of the world to live peaceably together. Whereupon I moved the latter, forasmuch as the land was before us and wide enough, with the proffer of Abraham to Lot, and for peace sake, to turn aside to the right hand, or to the left. The motion was readily accepted, and I was requested with some others to seek out a place, which accordingly I was ready to do." *Ill. News*; 4 *Mass. Hist.* 1, 2, 3.

2. *History New England*, II, 287.

Cotton, but he stuck close to the other, that only baptism was the door of entrance into the church." He had attempted in 1638, together with John Smith, John Spur, and others, to form a Baptist church at that place. "He labored hard," says Hubbard, (1) "to get such a church on foot, as all baptized ones might communicate in, without any further trial of them." And both Winthrop and Hubbard agree "that the common sort of people did eagerly embrace his opinions." But the attempt was frustrated by the vigorous interference of the magistrates. And Mr. Lenthall removed to Newport.

On his arrival here, Mr. Lenthall taught a public school, said to have been the earliest attempt of the kind in the country, if not in the world. He became at once helpful to Mr. Clarke, taking a prominent part in a public controversy which soon arose respecting two fundamental questions, namely, the sufficiency of Scripture as a rule of faith and practice, and the existence upon earth of a visible church with visible ordinances. Antinomians among the planters were pushing their principles still further, and claiming to be in possession of an inner light, which was to be followed rather than the teaching of the Word of God. "On the one side were Mr. Coddington, Mr. Coggeshall and some others, but their minister, Mr. Clarke, Mr. Lenthall, Mr. Harding, and some others dissented and publicly opposed, whereby it grew to such a heat of contention that it made a schism among them." (2) Mr. Clarke and his friends dissented from these new opinions which were being broached, and strenuously opposed them.

There united with the church in 1648, one to whom we are greatly indebted to-day, one who did very much to pre-

1. *History*, 2 *Mass. Hist. Coll.* V. 275.

2. Winthrop, Vol. II. pp. 40, 41. Backus, *History*, Vol. I. p. 97.

serve a record of our church history and of the general history of the period. SAMUEL HUBBARD was baptized into the church on the 3d of November of this year. Mr. Backus (1) has given this condensed account of his life. He came over to Salem in 1633, in his youth; joined to Watertown church in 1635; but went the same year up to Windsor, [Conn.] where he soon married a church member that removed from Dorchester, and they settled at Weathersfield; till in May, 1639, they removed to Springfield, and he was one of the five men who first joined in founding that church. It was constituted under Connecticut government, but falling afterwards into the Massachusetts, he removed in 1647 to Fairfield. Though he said, 'God having enlightened both, but mostly my wife, into his holy ordinance of baptizing only visible believers; and being zealous for it, she was mostly struck at, and answered twice publicly, where I was said to be as bad as she, and threatened with imprisonment to Hartford gaol, if we did not renounce it or remove. That Scripture came into our minds, If they persecute you in one place, flee to another.' Whereupon they removed to Newport, and joined to Elder Clarke's church there on November 3, 1648, where they lived to old age; from whence he repeatedly visited his suffering brethren at Boston, and had an extensive correspondence both in Europe and America; and he copied several hundred of his own and others' letters into a book, which I am now favored with; containing a fund of intelligence, from 1641 to 1688."

Of the fifteen names in the list of members of the church, as it was on the day of Mr. Hubbard's baptism, a few deserve to be mentioned. Two of them, THOMAS and JOSEPH CLARKE, were brothers of the pastor, the latter was "often a magistrate in the colony." WILLIAM WEEDEN became

1. *History*, Vol. 1. Preface, p. ix.

the first deacon in the church. MARK LUCAR, one of the earliest "ruling elders,"—for such an officer seems in the beginning to have been recognized. In 1650, he assisted in a religious work in Seekonk, when several were baptized on profession of their faith in Christ. The last name on the list is that of PAINTER, the Christian name being omitted, probably THOMAS PAINTER, of Hingham. Gov. Winthrop has in his Journal (1) given an account of him not at all flattering. The Massachusetts authorities had had trouble with him on account of his religious scruples. His chief crime against the public peace, that at any rate for which in 1644 he was ordered by the Court to be whipped, was his stoutly refusing to suffer his new-born babe to be carried to the baptismal font, and his saying that this "baptism was antichristian."

The church was greatly strengthened a few years later by a valuable accession of members, which happened on this wise. Baptist sentiments appeared in Seekonk (Rehoboth), and so increased that about 1649 an attempt was made to form a Baptist church. For this purpose assistance was sought from Newport. The pastor, with Mark Lucar, repaired thither to explain the way of the Lord more fully, to give needed counsel, and to perform any service required of them in the circumstances. Mr. Clarke had the pleasure of baptizing in likeness of the Savior's death several willing candidates, men and women, who had found the light and desired to walk in the way of the Lord's commands. (2) But the Plymouth magistrates, though not using so great severity as their neighbors at the Bay in similar circumstances, prosecuted the persons who had dared to take this step, and broke up the struggling church. Most of the members removed to Newport, and in 1650, or early in 1651, united

1. Vol. II. 174.

2. *Narr. Club Pub.* VI, 188. 4 *Mass. Hist. Coll.* VI. 274.



themselves with this church. Some of them became pillars in the church and eminent in the colony. Among them were OBADIAH HOLMES and JOSEPH TORREY, whom we shall meet again, and EDWARD SMITH, often a magistrate.

Notwithstanding the stringent law enacted by the General Court of Massachusetts in 1644, just after the offence of "poor Painter," Baptist sentiment continued to spread in that colony, and ever and anon sought to organize itself, but the vigilance of the magistrates was unremitting. No matter where the pestilent heresy appeared, there the authority of the colony was felt. Some of these scattered Baptists held their membership with this church. There was one such who lived in the town of Lynn, who was visited in 1651 by the pastor and two of his brethren. This brother, WILLIAM WITTER, had, eight years before the present visit from his Newport friends, spoken very strongly against infant baptism, calling it the badge and sign of popery. At a Court held in Salem in 1645, he "was presented by the grand jury for saying that they who staid whilst a child is baptized do worship the devil"; and being further dealt with, he said, "that they who staid at the baptizing of a child did take the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost in vain, broke the Sabbath, and confessed and justified the former speech." (1) Rather strong words, but perhaps necessary to give expression to his strong convictions. But he was now blind and infirm (2) and needed Christian counsel and consolation, and perhaps he knew of others who required the presence of a Baptist minister; and hence the celebrated visit of Clarke and his friends. This visit has been rendered so memorable, both on account of the treatment these Christian men received from the local authorities, and also on account of the influence which, in the providence of God.

1. *Mass. Col. Rec.* 111. 67-68.

2. *III News.* 4 *Mass. Hist. Coll.* 11. 27.

the visit had over individual lives and in determining the course of events in the Massachusetts colony. that we must delay a few moments upon it.

A journey from Newport to Lynn was not at that time one of hours, but of days. It was not made by rail then as now, nor even by stage coach, but by private conveyance; and Mr. Clarke and his friends possibly went on foot. It was midsummer. Dusty and weary, the travellers reached their destination on a Saturday evening. The house of their brother, where they were kindly entertained, was two miles out of the village. To this quiet Christian home they were joyfully welcomed. "The next being the Lord's day they concluded to spend it in religious worship at his house." While the pastor was in this private manner discoursing upon the temptations which come to the people of God, he was seized by two constables and held in custody. Occasion was found, however, it would seem, to administer the Lord's ordinances; baptism to candidates waiting to follow Christ in this way of his appointment, and the Lord's supper to the little company of believers. In this act there was no infringement of the law of Christ, nor any deviation from Baptist usage. The following words of Dr. Heman Lincoln (1) are just to the point. "Mr. Witter had, probably, written to the church at Newport, that there were persons in his vicinity who wished to be baptized. The church sent, not their pastor alone, but Holmes, also a preacher, and Crandall, a private member, that their number might give a church authority to all their acts. They baptized the candidates, one of whom may have been under admonition in a State church for his Baptist opinions. The supper was then celebrated, and the newly baptized converts partook with

1. In the *Examiner and Chronicle*, Dec. 23, 1875. One of a series of Centennial Notes in that Journal on the First New England Baptists.

Witter. This view, which is in perfect harmony with all the facts in the case, makes the administration of the supper an orderly service, such as the strictest Baptist would approve. The Newport church kept the ordinance, at one of its outposts, as many of our churches in Burmah and China observe it frequently in our day."

On Tuesday, the three strangers were sent to Boston and committed to prison. When brought before the Court to answer for their misdemeanors, Mr. Clarke relates: "The Governor stepped up and told us we had denied infant baptism, and being somewhat transported, told me I had deserved death, and said he would not have such trash brought into their jurisdiction. Moreover, he said, you go up and down, and secretly insinuate into those who are weak; but you cannot maintain your teaching before our ministers. You may try and dispute with them." And Mr. Clarke at once prepared himself accordingly; and was then informed that the disputation could not take place.

He reduced his propositions, however, to writing, four in number, and the following year gave them to the public. The first had respect to the kingship of Christ; "that there is none to or with him by way of commanding and ordering, with respect to the worship of God, the household of faith." The second stated "that baptism, or dipping in water, is one of the commandments of this Lord Jesus Christ, and that a visible believer or disciple of Christ Jesus (that is, one that manifesteth repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ) is the only person that is to be baptized." The third, "that every such believer in Christ Jesus may in point of liberty, yea, ought in point of duty, to improve that talent his Lord hath given unto him, and in the congregation may speak by way of prophecy for the edification, exhorta-



tion and comfort of the whole." The fourth, "that no such believer or servant of Christ Jesus hath any liberty, much less authority from his Lord, to use force in constraining or restraining the conscience, nor with the arm of flesh compel to the worship of God." (1)

Although his opponents prudently retired from the field, so that there was no public discussion, this faithful testimony to the truth was fruitful of good. It led to thought, to a study of the word of God and to noble confessions of allegiance to Christ. Among the number of those whose attention was arrested and whose convictions were carried, was Henry Dunstar, an eminent scholar, and the first president of Harvard College. (2) He at once took a decided stand. He "boldly preached against infant baptism, and for believers' baptism, in the pulpit at Cambridge in 1653, the year after our brethren were imprisoned at Boston." Mr. Dunstar lost in consequence his position at the head of the College, and soon after removed out of the Massachusetts jurisdiction. These events were moulding public opinion and preparing the way for the formation of a Baptist church in Boston, which took place in 1665.

While Mr. Clarke was thus active and making his influence felt as a Christian and a minister in behalf of the cause of Christ, and when it would seem that he could be ill spared at home, he was summoned to proceed with all possible despatch to England on urgent business connected with the government of the colony. One of the leading citizens of the island had obtained a commission which vacated the charter, and invested him with the Governorship of the island for life. It was a critical moment for the infant colony. Mr. Clarke and Mr. Williams, who were associated

1. *Ill News*. 4 *Mass. Hist. Coll.* II. 34-37. Backus, I. 182-184.

2. Backus, II. 418. Benedict, *History*, 1813, I. 379. See also *Life of Dunstar*, by Jeremiah Chaplin, D. D.

in the mission, were eminently successful in accomplishing their delicate task. And after this work was done, Mr. Clarke continued for twelve years to reside abroad, watching over the interests of the colony, preventing any harm from coming to it through the machinations of its enemies, and not quitting his difficult post until he had secured the great charter of 1663, which bears the impress of his eminent abilities and practical skill.

Meanwhile the church was left to the care of Messrs. Torrey and Holmes, two elders in the church. Within a year after Mr. Clarke had left for England, new opinions began to be broached and converts to be made to a new doctrine, namely: that the imposition of hands upon all believers was an ordinance of Christ, and as binding upon all disciples as baptism, or the observance of the memorial feast. The discussion began in 1652, and in 1656 twenty-one members withdrew to form a church which should embrace this new article of faith. This new doctrine gained ground very rapidly, making many converts in the colony. Many churches were formed, embracing this tenet, and toward the close of the seventeenth century an association of these churches was formed which held its annual meetings.

A few brethren began in 1665 to keep the seventh day under the impression that the Scriptures inculcate it, and the church at first bore with those who had these conscientious scruples. But it was found impossible for them and the church to walk together harmoniously, and in 1671 a small number seceded and formed a Sabbatarian church. Although the withdrawal of so many excellent members weakened the church numerically, these discussions were not entirely unprofitable, since they served to drive the members to a closer study of the Bible and to make them more familiar with its teachings. When the Boston church

was in sore trouble in 1668, this church, ready with sympathy and prompt for action, sent them with all despatch a fraternal deputation bearing Christian salutations and words of cheer. After his return from England, Mr. Clarke resumed his pastorate, and held it till his death, which occurred April 20, 1676.

This year, 1676, was one of sorrows to the church. Repeated afflictions fell with severity upon it. Several standard bearers were removed by death. Early in the year JOSEPH TORREY died, having been for many years a "teacher" and "elder" in the church, one of those deputed to assist their brethren in Boston when in trouble; and, during all the time of his residence in the colony, being one of its most prominent citizens, holding many important offices, at one time that of Attorney General, and for several years that of General Recorder, or, as we should now say, Secretary of State.

Next to be removed, and very suddenly, was the pastor himself, on the 20th of April. By his death a strong man was laid low, one of the most eminent men in the colony, whom his fellow citizens had honored and trusted through many long years, and whose counsels seemed essential to the colony's welfare, if not to its very existence. Although five years before he had withdrawn from all civil offices and retired strictly to private life and to the care of his church, his counsels were still sought. Only sixteen days before his death he was summoned to attend a meeting of the Court, or General Assembly, "the Assembly desiring to have the advice and concurrence of the most judicious inhabitants in the troublous times and straits into which the colony had been brought." And seven days later, he was appointed a commissioner to put the island in a state of defence, and to station signals, "to effect the premises with the greatest pos-

sible expedition for the safety of the whole." But we cannot here recount the great services Mr. Clarke rendered the State, which began with the very settlement of the colony and continued even to his death. He was a man of broad and liberal views. Yet while a zealous advocate of the most advanced doctrines concerning personal liberty and the rights of conscience, he was at the same time the earnest champion of law, affirming the importance of maintaining its integrity,—Christ's law in the church and civil law in the State. He was also in the fullest sympathy with every effort to give enlightenment to the people. His hand may be discovered in the measure to secure a free school for Newport in 1640. It was a personal friend who was entrusted with the execution of the noble idea. And in his last will he remembered the cause of education, making it one care of his trustees at a time when educational advantages were very limited, to provide for the "bringing up children to learning." He also warmly loved this church, leaving it several bequests, and speaking of it as the church "to which he was nearly related." WILLIAM WEEDEN, the senior deacon, who had in April been named a trustee in the will of Mr. Clarke, himself died the last of the October following. And MARK LUCAR, at an advanced age, died on the 26th of December, "leaving the character of a very worthy walker."

Such were some of the heavy afflictions which had fallen on the church when OBADIAH HOLMES became its pastor. He was born in Preston, Lancashire, England, about 1606, and was educated at the university of Oxford. He came to this country about 1639, and united with the Congregational church in Salem, and six years afterward removed to Rehoboth (Seekonk), and assisted in forming a church of the same order in that town. About 1649, he, with others, after studying the teachings of Christ, changed their religious senti-

ments, were baptized by Mr. Clarke, and formed themselves into a church, which, however, was of short continuance, as Mr. Holmes and most of the others, as we have already mentioned, removed to Newport and became members of this church. He was made a "teaching elder," and was one of the number who went to Lynn in 1651. While the other two delegates were only imprisoned and fined, Mr. Holmes suffered an additional punishment, probably on account of his course in Rehoboth. The punishment—whipping—was so severe that Gov. Jenckes says, (1) "He could take no rest except by supporting himself on his elbows and knees." Morgan Edwards (2) remarks, that "this was the first instance of tormenting for conscience sake in New England"; adding that "A Baptist was the protomartyr here, as a Baptist was the first martyr that was burned in Old England." In a letter to Mr. Spilsbury, a London pastor, Mr. Holmes has given a detailed account of the scourging, and also of the supporting grace he had while enduring it. Besides letters, he has left a deeply interesting account of his early life and conversion to Christ addressed to his children, and also a confession of his faith. (3.) Mr. Holmes died Oct. 15, 1682. (4.)

1. Benedict, *History*, I. 375.

2. *Materials for history of Baptists of R. I. R. I. Hist. Coll*, VI. 332.

3. Backus, *History*, I. 175-176, 187-193, 206-209.

4. A writer in *Appleton's Journal*, Vol. XV., No. 376 (June, 1876), George Dudley Lawson, informs us that Mr. Holmes "brought the first pendulum-clock to America!" In an interesting article entitled "An old clock," wherein is described this ancient piece of household furniture, Mr. Lawson says: "Time was, before the cheapening, enterprising Yankee age, when that teller of the dropping hours was a tradition except in the houses of the wealthy; and even they, the favored few, were only able to treat themselves to 'horologes,' as a general rule, after the year 1600 Anno Domini. The pendulum was the first application to popularize clocks, and it is not yet three hundred years ago that Galileo sat in church and caught the inspiration of the swinging lamp. It was in 1582, just a century before the death of the man who brought the first pendulum-clock to America; and that clock, one of the first of the kind ever constructed, is ticking away to-day in Brooklyn, keeping accurate time and claiming no small meed of admiration from the curious and venerating through who know of its existence. . . . This ancient timepiece is one of the attractions of the Long Island Historical Society's rooms, having been presented to the society by John Holmes Baker, Esq., a descendant of the reverend gentleman whose memory it serves to keep green. . . . It is most reasonable to look for the possession of the earliest pendulum clocks among scientists and literary men; in fact, the astronomers of the Continent seem to have monopolized them at their first construction, and that a clergyman—a learned scholar—should possess and bring to America one of the first pendulum-clocks made, is certainly within the bounds of possibility."

*Ibid.* pp. 726-728.



Besides those already named and others we might mention if time permitted, there were two members during this period who deserve a passing notice. One of these was JOHN COOKE, who had been a Congregational minister in Plymouth colony, but having had his attention arrested by a small book by Mr. Russell, pastor of the Baptist church in Boston, he became a Baptist, and previous to 1680 united himself to this church. This circumstance was the occasion and the subject of a letter from John Cotton to his nephew, Dr. Cotton Mather. (1) It may be of interest to know that John Cooke is said to have "come over with his father in the Mayflower. He was settled as minister at Dartmouth in 1676. He was living in 1694, probably the oldest survivor of the male passengers in the Mayflower." Another was PHILIP EDES, who was admitted a freeman at Newport in 1671, and was one of the witnesses to the signature of Mr. Clarke's will. He was a man of eminent business qualities, and of high social position. And he was at the same time a truly godly man who held all worldly distinctions as nothing compared with the honor of being a disciple of Christ. He had been a friend of Oliver Cromwell, and a helper in the time of the Protectorate. Dissatisfied with the state of the country in England, he had sought a home in Rhode Island. In a letter to Gov. William Leete, of Connecticut, Samuel Hubbard paid this tribute to the worth of Mr. Edes: (2) "This friend of yours and mine, one in office in Oliver's house, was for liberty of conscience; a merchant, a precious man, of a holy life and conversation, beloved of all sorts of men, his death much bewailed by all." It is pleasant to recall the memory of this Christian gentleman, who, though immersed in cares of business and of state, was a devout Christian, an obedient disciple, a humble follower of Christ.

1. 4 *Mass. Hist. Coll.* VIII, 251.

2. Backus, I. 405.

The doctrinal position of the church during the period over which we have passed may be learned from the events already narrated, from the separations which had taken place, and from the confessions of faith of its pastors, which are strongly Calvinistic. The church was in frequent communication through some of its members with the Particular Baptists of London; and letters were frequently passed between this church and the churches of Swansea and Boston, both being at the time Calvinistic in doctrine. Incipient Socinianism was rebuked in 1673, when five persons were disfellowshipped for denying the deity of Christ. We know that singing in public worship was approved and practised, as it was one ground of the secession in 1656. But we have not learned what book of psalmody was used. Many churches, perhaps the majority of them, during this period objected to singing in the public worship of God. A spirited controversy was carried on in England upon the subject, in which the celebrated Benjamin Keach took the affirmative and maintained his position with cogent arguments. One is perplexed to know what arguments could have been urged by the disputant who took the negative on the question. We find, moreover, that the early fathers believed in child-conversions, and that children could profess faith in Christ and become members of the church. Samuel Hubbard's daughter RUTH was, Nov. 12, 1652, baptized at the age of twelve years. And such instances are numerous during the history of the church. We have already learned how widely the church had extended its influence, how potent it was in Massachusetts, how closely connected with the little centres of Baptist sentiment that were so frequently appearing in that colony. It possessed indeed the missionary spirit, and sought to carry out the commission Christ entrusted to his churches.

About five years after the death (1) of Mr. Holmes, a young man from Boston came to this place and for "above two years" had been so "very diligent and laborious in preaching the gospel of Christ," that the church agreed to call him to become their pastor, and sent a letter to the Boston church desiring them, in the language of the letter, "to set him apart for that work and legally ordain him by the orderly way of the gospel by laying on of the hands of your Elders, praying earnestly for him and us that God would in much mercy make him a blessing unto us during his abode with us, and also an instrument in the hands of God to the converting of souls, that the gospel from his lips may be so blest, and by God's Spirit so applied to the hearts of the hearers that it may prove to be to them the power of God unto salvation, so that they may first give themselves up unto the Lord, and then unto us by the will of God, to walk in the faith and order of the gospel as becomes all true converts." This latter certainly breathes the spirit of Christ, and shows a proper appreciation of a pastor's work. We almost instinctively ask how many of those who were then animated by all the hopes and fears of life, but have now for so many long years slept in death, were savingly benefited by the preacher's words and labors.

This young man was RICHARD DINGLEY, who came from England to Boston, and was in 1684 received into the Baptist church there; he came to this town about 1687, perhaps earlier, and was ordained two years later, and became pastor of this church. "The ordination," says Comer, "was by Mr. Thomas Skinner, pastor of the church in Boston, and Mr. James Barker, a ministering brother belonging to this church." On assuming his charge, Mr. Dingley delivered a

1. Mr. Backus says, "Near three years after." II. 15. Cf. Vol. I. 419, 420. Comer, in copying the letter of the church asking assistance in the ordination, says, "The date being decayed and torn out of the letter, it can't be inserted exactly."



judicious address to his church, "wherein he describes the duties of a pastor to his people, and of a people to their pastor, in a clear, scriptural light," says Mr. Backus, who had in his possession a copy of the address. About 1694 Mr. Dingley resigned his office and removed to South Carolina.

After his departure, the church was without pastoral oversight for more than a decade of years, depending meanwhile upon occasional supplies. Though it must have seriously suffered during this interval, there were nevertheless signs of material prosperity. In 1707 the meeting house at "Green End," which, it has been suggested, and with probability, was the first meeting house, the one wherein Clarke and Holmes preached, was sold, and another built, which was finished the following year, upon a lot on Tanner street, given to the church by Mr. Clarke.

Shortly afterward, the church began to look around among its own members for a suitable person to induct into the pastoral office, and soon laid hands on WILLIAM PECKHAM, who was ordained November, 1711. One DANIEL WHITE, who had come with a letter from England, was in 1718 chosen assistant pastor, but a serious trouble arose almost immediately, which led to a temporary division of the church. The difficulty seems, from Comer's account of it, to have been occasioned by the headiness of Mr. White, who attempted to go forward without regard to proper order in the discharge of pastoral duties. "By virtue of the call and without the imposition of hands he administered all the special ordinances of the gospel." A council, called to adjust the difficulties, met with but little success. Mr. White is said to have been a member of Mr. Wallin's church in London; if so, he does not seem to have imbibed the gentle spirit of his pastor. A

meeting house was built for him in 1724, where he maintained separate worship until the 21st of July, 1728, when the house was sold. "and he took farewell of the place on the 7th of August. Thus the meeting upheld by him finished ——and the only surviving member that he left behind him was a solitary woman." "It is necessary," says the Lord of the church, "that offences come," but a woe is pronounced upon the troublers. Mr. Peckham maintained his official relations with the church until his death in 1732, though in his later life he was designated "elder," and his associate, "pastor." He was present at a church meeting, which, at his request, was held in his house, June 21, 1732; "at the close the ancient elder gave his good advice and blessing to the church, and the meeting closed." Though "his gifts were small," Mr. Peckham was a very worthy man and exemplary Christian.

It was while Mr. White was maintaining his separate meeting, and the wounds were fresh which the controversy had made, that the church, having thoroughly repaired their meeting house, extended a call to a gifted young brother to become their pastor, who was to prove a great blessing to them. JOHN COMER was born in Boston, Aug. 1, 1704, and pursued his studies first at Cambridge, and then at Yale College. When seventeen years of age, he united with the Congregational church in Cambridge. An intimate friend of his, Ephraim Crafts, had joined the Baptist church, which young Comer thought to be very improper and wrong, "and took the first opportunity to try to convince him of his error. After a considerable debate, Comer was prevailed upon to take and read Stennett upon baptism, which gave him quite other views of the subject than he ever had before." He resolved, however, not to act upon the convictions which

had been fastened upon his mind, and entered college at New Haven. A storm at sea while he was upon its bosom between New Haven and Boston, and the tidings of the death of a dear friend, so deeply impressed his mind and brought eternity so near to him, "as to spoil all his plausible excuses for the neglect of baptism"; and the words of Christ came to him with irresistible force, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels." He accordingly determined to obey the call of duty, and was, Jan. 31, 1725, baptized by Rev. Elisha Callender, pastor of the Baptist church in Boston.

He was called to the ancient town of Swanzea, where a Baptist church had been long established and Baptists were comparatively numerous, and the public sentiment was favorable to them; but he decided to accept an invitation to Newport, received at the same time, partly through the advice of his pastor; who wrote to him (1) that "these two things, which congregation most needs help, and which field affords the fairest prospect of doing good, would determine me to go to Newport. And then, besides, some other considerations fall in, which should have their force; and they are these:—your own comfort in the benefit of conversation, of which, to be sure, there is greater choice at Newport; and then, again, as to your subsistence, which, as far as I can learn, is as like to be as comfortable at Newport as elsewhere." In view of what we already know of the condition of the church at this time, we can understand the import of the advice added by the pastor, in case a decision was reached in favor of Newport: 1. Study well all your public discourses and look upon it your business to compose ser-

1. Backus, II. 17.

mons in a handsome style and good method. 2. Carefully avoid all controversy in the pulpit. 3. Be sure that you never enter into the contention that has been at Newport." Mr. Comer was ordained May 19, 1726. He entered into his work with all the ardor of youth, and gave a decided impetus to the church life. Singing, which seems to have fallen into disuse, was re-introduced into the public worship. Mr. Comer also commenced regular church records, and gathered much material toward a history of the church. Although a salary was voted him at the time of his settlement, an effort was early made to bring the church into conformity with the scriptural method of raising money—to induce every one to lay aside each week as the Lord had prospered. A vote was passed Sept. 8, 1726, "that a weekly contribution for the support of the ministry should be observed." During his ministry, many of those, nearly all indeed, who had gone off with Mr. White, returned to the church and were cordially received.

Mr. Comer at length embraced the opinion, then finding many adherents, that hands should be laid upon all baptized believers, and in November, 1728, preached it as an ordinance of Christ and consequently as a Christian duty. This led to a severance of the pastoral relation, and his dismissal from the church, January, 1729. As other reasons have been assigned for this action on the part of the church and the pastor, it may be well to give Mr. Comer's own words respecting the cause of the separation. "This, and only this was the reason why" we separated, "because I preached up the imposition of hands." (1) He subsequently went to Rehoboth, where, after gathering a Six Principle church, he died May 23, 1734, at the early age of thirty years. Mr. Comer was a man of fervent piety and untiring industry.

1. *Manuscript* in the keeping of the R. I. Hist. Soc.

He has left a name fragrant throughout our Baptist Israel. He rendered an invaluable service to the denomination by, rescuing and preserving many facts connected with its history which would have been utterly lost but for his faithful labors.

Of the members of the church during this period, we may mention PHILIP SMITH, who was baptized in 1662, and subsequently made a deacon in the church; admitted a freeman at Newport in 1671, and one of the first trustees of John Clarke's estate. And JAMES BARKER, who was an elder and a teacher in the church, and assisted in the ordination of Mr. Dingley; he was mentioned in the charter of 1663, and was one of the "judicious citizens" whom the General Assembly called to its assistance during the trying times of 1676. There were others who went out from the church to do excellent service in other places. PETER FOULGER, the maternal grandfather of Benjamin Franklin, whom Robert C. Winthrop calls "New England's most wonderful son," was early interested in the conversion of the Indians and went himself as a missionary among them. Mr. Prince describes him as "an able, godly Englishman, employed in teaching the youth in reading, writing, and the principles of religion by catechizing; being well learned likewise in the Scripture, and capable of helping them in religious matters." (1) He united with this church not far from 1676. After he became a Baptist he labored so zealously that Baptist principles prevailed extensively among them, and by 1694 a Baptist church was in existence at Martha's Vineyard, and another on Nantucket. It would be interesting, too, to make mention of one or two Indian pastors, who maintained a consistent Christian walk.

1. Quoted by Backus, I. 346. Cf. II. 507.



“The first Baptist minister in the province,” now the state “of Pennsylvania,” was THOMAS DUNGAN, (1) who was dismissed from this church, and went to Coldspring, Buck’s County, Pennsylvania, about the year 1684, “three years after William Penn obtained his patent of Charles II.” It is related that Elias Keach, son of Benjamin Keach, of London, arrived in this country, a very wild youth, about the year 1686. While preaching on one occasion before a large audience, by way of reckless fun, he was seized with fearful compunctions of conscience and was strongly convicted of his enormous sins, and went in search of Mr. Dungan, by whom he was instructed and baptized, and then after a few years he returned to England and became an eminent “and successful minister in London.” OBADIAH HOLMES, son of the second pastor, (2) settled in New Jersey, first at Middletown in 1667, and afterward, in 1685, at Cohansey. He was the first preacher at the latter place, though not ordained: and says Edwards, “he continued an occasional preacher while he lived, though a Judge of the Common Pleas in Salem Court.” JOHN HOLMES, brother, I suppose, of the Obadiah just mentioned, bequeathed to the Church in 1748 the sum of one hundred and fifty pounds, to be held by trustees appointed by the church, and the interest thereof “to be applied to and for the use of the Teaching Elder of said church or society.” And if for any reason there be no “Pastor and Teaching Elder” then during that time the interest accruing therefrom shall be applied to the poor of said church. JONATHAN HOLMES was a member of the church in 1711.

1. Morgan Edwards, *Materials etc.*, Penna. p. 10. Benedict I. 580. Backus, I. 221-

2. Obadiah Holmes, the senior, pastor of this church, whose wife’s name was Catharine, had eight children, Mary, Martha, Lydia, Hopesfill, John, Obadiah, Samuel and Jonathan. A grandson was living in Newport in 1771, in the 96th year of his age. “Several of his descendants are yet in this government, some in Long Island, York, East and West Jersey, Pennsylvania, etc.,” says Morgan Edwards. *Materials etc.*, R. I. He writes in 1792, “Could all that sprang from the above-named confessor, in male and female lines, be numbered, it is supposed they would amount to near 5000.” *Materials etc.*, N. J. p. 33.

The doctrinal position during this period remained unchanged. The several pastors, and, so far as appears, the members, were in accord with the doctrinal statements made at the beginning. In transcribing a portion of Mr. Clarke's Confession, Mr. Comer says: "Having found in the hands of brother Edward Smith, a small book written by Mr. John Clarke, the first pastor of this church, containing his judgment and the judgment of the church respecting that soul-supporting doctrine of personal election, which is at this present day so much contemned, for the establishing of the church under its present constitution in this glorious truth, I think it not improper to transcribe it, this 31st day of July, 1727." A church covenant was written and signed in behalf of the church on the 4th of the preceding May, with this prefatory remark: "As to the covenant drawn up by this church and consented and subscribed to in its first constitution, it being not to be found in the church, hereupon they thought it meet and convenient solemnly to subscribe one, as a testimony to their Gospel unity and order."

Days of fasting and prayer, and of thanksgiving and praise were observed then as now. Some of the objects were those which we remember when assembled on like occasions; others show the changes that have been wrought by the passing years. The 16th of November, 1727, "was observed as a day of thanksgiving to God," in the words of the record, "for the many mercies of the year past, for the plentiful harvest afforded, for the peaceable accession of his sacred Majesty King George the 2d to the throne, the deliverance granted in the late earthquake, and for the general health enjoyed etc." And the 28th of the following month "was observed as a day of fasting and prayer by the church for a sanetified use and improvement of the judgment of God and

particularly the repeated and continued shocks of an earthquake that is still felt in the neighboring province, and our own deadness and dullness as to the power and life of religion, and the amendment of our ways and doings before the Lord, and for a blessing on the means of grace which we enjoy, that God will bless them for the saving conviction and conversion of many precious souls." The efficiency of the church was increased by the choice of additional deacons, who were ordained by the imposition of hands: two, PETER TAYLOR and SAMUEL MAXWELL, in 1724, and another, WILLIAM PECKHAM, in 1727. Evangelical work was done beyond the immediate field of the church. A letter was received by the church in 1727 from several brethren in Springfield, "who had submitted to the holy ordinance of baptism and were now, as it were, like sheep without a shepherd," asking that Mr. Comer might come and preach to them, "and administer the ordinance, if any should present" themselves as candidates.

It would be interesting if we could have a bird's eye view of the town of Newport as it then appeared. Failing of this, we may be partially gratified by a lively description given by Dean Berkely, in a letter written April 24, 1729. He says, (1) "Here are four sorts of Anabaptists, besides Presbyterians, Quakers, Independents, and many of no profession at all. Notwithstanding so many differences, here are fewer quarrels about religion than elsewhere, the people living peaceably with their neighbors of whatsoever persuasion. . . . The town of Newport contains about six thousand souls, and is the most thriving in all America for bigness. It is pretty and pleasantly situated. I never was more agreeably surprised than at the first sight of the town and harbor."

1. Callender, Elton's notes, pp. 31, 32.



After the retirement of Mr. Comer, the church called JOHN CALLENDER to the pastorship, who was ordained Oct. 13, 1731, "by fasting and prayer and imposition of hands, the churches of Boston and Swanzea in communion with us" being invited to assist in the service. A sermon from Matt. XXVIII. 18, 19, was preached on the occasion by his uncle, the Rev. Elisha Callender. Mr. Callender was born in Boston in 1706, and graduated at Harvard College in 1723, when but seventeen years old; and the same year united with the Baptist church in Boston, of which his uncle was then pastor. For nearly a year and a half, from August, 1728, until February, 1730, he supplied the Baptist church in Swanzea, when he received and accepted an invitation to become pastor of this church. The following record of a church meeting held only a few days after his ordination, has an interest for us; it says: "After prayer to God that all our things may be done in charity, in order, and to edification, we came to these agreements: That the last Lord's day in the month be the day for breaking bread, or administration of the Lord's supper; That the fifth day before that be the church meeting; That the second fifth day in the month be a Lecture day; That such Lecture and meeting begin exactly at one o'clock, P. M."

The one hundredth anniversary of the settlement of the island was fittingly celebrated by the church. The occasion was rendered memorable, first, by the erection on our present site of a new house of worship, the lot having been generously given by two public spirited members of the society. The building still stands as a place of business, in a state of good preservation. It would have been well if, when sold by the church, it had been devoted to the purposes of a museum, or an antiquarian hall. The occasion was commem-

orated, secondly, by the delivery on the 24th of March, of a historical discourse by the pastor, generally known as the "Century Sermon." This sermon was the first history of the colony of Rhode Island that was ever written, and is a classic on all that pertains to the early condition of the State. Mr. Callender continued in the pastoral office till his death, which occurred Jan. 26, 1748. There is an oil portrait of him now in the Redwood Library, copied by Miss Jane Stuart from a painting by Smibert, the latter being deposited in the library of the Rhode Island Historical Society.

Mr. Callender was a man of learning, a member of a philosophical society, which, it is said, "was select, and some of whose members were men of great intellectual power"; and which afterward obtained a charter under the name of The Company of the Redwood Library. He also took a lively interest in the public schools of the city, being himself for a time one of the teachers. But Mr. Callender failed to comprehend the wonderful evangelical movement known as the Great Awakening, which during his ministry was sweeping with blessed influences over New England. When George Whitefield, on his first visit to New England, landed at Newport in 1740, Mr. Callender stood aloof from him and refused to give the remarkable preacher a welcome to his pulpit. He afterward wrote to England an unfavorable account of the work being done, and said: "I see no reason to alter the opinion I early entertained of Mr. Whitefield, that he was a second George Fox." Before penning these words Mr. Callender had not studied either the work or the man with sufficient carefulness. If he could have witnessed the subsequent results of the work, he would have rejoiced in them most heartily; for he was a good man, and labored for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom. In 1733 his church

very considerably voted him a respite from home duties, that he might "visit and help the brethren at Springfield."

He was succeeded in the pastoral office by EDWARD UPHAM, who was born in Malden, Mass., in 1709, and graduated at Harvard in 1734. Having for a season served a church in Springfield, he became in 1748 pastor of this church. It was during his ministry that the Baptists of the country began to feel strongly the need of a college of their own, one that should be under their control, where their sons could have the best advantages for acquiring a liberal culture without being subjected to such tests as would do violence to their religious convictions. This feeling found expression first in word and then in act. All minds turned to Rhode Island as the most suitable place for the proposed undertaking. Consequently James Manning, a man of cultivated mind and consecrated heart, who was destined for many years to wield a strong and salutary influence for the cause of truth in Rhode Island and all New England, came to the State with the full concurrence and endorsement of the Philadelphia Baptists, charged with the difficult task of carrying into execution the contemplated plan, of transmuting into fact the noble idea. In 1764 he opened a school at Warren. But both Providence and Newport coveted the institution. And it is still one of the unsolved mysteries why the former town should have been chosen for the location of the College rather than the latter. Doubtless the leaders in the enterprise had what seemed to them good and sufficient reasons for their choice. Nor are we disposed for a moment to call in question the wisdom of their decision. Time itself has justified, if any justification were needed, the selection they made. Perhaps that which influenced them lies very near the surface. Were the Baptists here too

liberal just at that time? Mr. Upham has had the reputation of being "dark in doctrine," and of holding rather loosely some of the distinctive principles of the Baptists. (1) Or, by uniting his duties with those of a pastor, could the President eke out a slender salary better in Providence than in Newport? For was not here "the centre of Baptist influence?" Certainly here the Baptists were at that time the more numerous, having two churches instead of one. And "Newport was the second city in New England, and the centre of opulence, refinement and learning. In her extensive commerce and trade, her numerous manufactories, and her merchant princes, she excelled indeed all other cities in the American colonies." (2) Nevertheless, Newport, although deprived of the College, gave to it many warm friends, several of whom were enrolled among its benefactors and earliest corporators. Mr. Upham was one of its Board of Fellows from 1764 to 1789. And we express the hope that Newport Baptists will always show themselves the devoted friends of the College and take a lively interest in its welfare; and, as they may have opportunity, help it to increase the number of advantages it may offer to the earnest student. Mr. Upham resigned the pastoral charge of the church in 1771, and returned to Springfield, where he continued to reside till the close of life. He deceased October, 1797.

ERASMUS KELLEY, who was born in Buck's Co., Pennsylvania, July 24, 1748, educated at the College of Pennsylvania where he was matriculated in 1769, and baptized the same year, succeeded Mr. Upham, being ordained pastor of the church, Oct. 9, 1771. (3) The times were feverish. There

1. See a sketch of him in Dr. Sprague's *Annals of the American Pulpit*, Vol. VI.  
 2. Guild, *Manning and Brown University*, p. 113. And Dr. Benjamin Waterhouse, Professor in Harvard College, is quoted as saying, "The island of Rhode Island, from its salubrity, and surpassing beauty, before the Revolutionary War so sadly defaced it, was the chosen resort of the rich, and philosophic, from nearly all parts of the civilized world."

3. In a brief notice of him written in 1770 Morgan Edwards says, "He is a hopeful youth!" *Materials etc. Penna.* p. 40.

were indications of the approaching civil conflict. A few overt acts had already occurred. The revolutionary war was approaching. Nevertheless the church made extensive improvements upon their meeting house, greatly enlarging it, nearly doubling its seating capacity, and opened it for public worship June 23, 1773, when Mr. Kelley preached from I Kings VIII. 27-29. In 1778 the British troops took possession of the meeting house, and the church were scattered. The war then waging between England and America fell with terrible effect upon Newport, completely paralyzing its industries. Mr. Kelly left the town on the 19th of April, 1778, but, on the conclusion of peace between the two countries, returned April 24, 1784, and died the 7th of the following November.

On the first Lord's day in January, 1785, BENJAMIN FOSTER began his labors as pastor of this church, being formally installed on the 5th of the following June. Mr. Foster was born in Danvers, Mass., June 12, 1750, and graduated at Yale College in 1774. While pursuing his studies in College, he was on one occasion appointed to defend pedobaptism in a public debate. (1) He set himself resolutely to the task, and labored diligently to gather all the arguments usually relied upon to prove infant baptism, and to arrange them in due and logical order, turning constantly to the Scriptures at every step for confirmation. But what was his amazement to find the confirmation entirely wanting. As the result of his inquiries he disappointed both himself and others by becoming a convert to the opposite views, and publicly avowed himself a Baptist. He found on a careful study of the Bible, that only such as can profess faith in Christ are legitimate subjects of baptism. That in all the Bible there is not one precept, nor a single example,

1. Biographical sketch, Benedict, II. 301.



requiring or warranting the baptism of infants. That such an application of the ordinance is, indeed, pernicious and wrong. And Mr. Foster, honestly acting upon his convictions, was baptized into the First Baptist church in Boston, by the Rev. Samuel Stillman, the pastor, with whom he studied theology. He was ordained Oct. 23, 1776, in Leicester, Mass., where he preached until he became pastor of this church. In September, 1785, the church voted to unite with the Warren Association. Two years later Tate and Brady's collection of hymns was superseded by Dr. Watts' Psalms and Hymns. Very large accessions were made during his pastorate. He was dismissed Sept. 15, 1788 to the First Baptist church in New York city, occasioning great sorrow to his people here. There are letters now on the books of the church which show that the members did not gracefully yield up their pastor, that they indeed almost charged the New York church with alluring him away by guile. Dr. Foster died Aug. 26, 1798. He was a man of wide and exact learning. Benedict (1) says, "As a scholar, particularly in the Greek, Hebrew and Chaldean languages, he has left few superiors. As a divine, he was strictly Calvinistic, and full on the doctrine of salvation by free grace. As a preacher he was indefatigable."

Among the members of the church during this period were SAMUEL FOWLER, who was baptized into the church in 1759, and who was a member of the last colonial Assembly of Rhode Island which passed the bold act, "the last important act in the colonial history of Rhode Island," which severed the colony from Great Britain and created it an independent state; and WILLIAM CLAGGETT, who united with the church in 1733, a very ingenious man, intimate with Dr. Franklin, and anticipating him in some of his experiments on

1. Vol. II. p. 304.



electricity; (1) and HEZEKIAH CARPENTER, who became a member two years later, and who, together with Gov. Lyndon, gave to the church the lot on which the present meeting house stands. JOSIAS LYNDON, an attached friend of the church and one of its noblest benefactors, who, in 1778, bequeathed his mansion to the church for a parsonage, was "esteemed a man of piety, though he never joined the church." (2) His wife, MARY LYNDON, was a very devoted and influential member.

The doctrinal position of the church has perhaps been already made sufficiently clear in the accounts given of the several pastors. It had not materially changed from that maintained at the beginning. During the ministry of the last pastor, the scattered members were gathered back to the fold and the ravages made by the war were entirely repaired, the church indeed receiving a large numerical increase. The sole surviving deacon, WILLIAM PECKHAM, died on the 12th of April, 1784. The records of the following year inform us, that "considering the circumstances and late increase of the church the propriety of having two deacons appeared, and at a church meeting called for that purpose" two brethren were chosen, BENJAMIN HALL and JOSEPH PIKE, who were subsequently "publicly and solemnly ordained." The project was contemplated in 1733-4, in connection with Elder Wightman's church, of building a baptistery at Green End, perhaps after the model of the baptisteries of ancient times.

1. "He constructed an electrical machine of such dimensions, as to occupy the principal part of one of the rooms of his house.... He was intimate with the celebrated Dr. Benjamin Franklin, and it is said that when the Doctor visited Newport some time previous to Mr. Claggett's death, although he had made some electrical experiments by the friction of glass bars, yet this was the first machine of the kind he had ever seen.... Subsequently to the death of Mr. Claggett, and while Dr. Franklin was in Philadelphia, his son, Thomas Claggett, desirous of setting up a machine on the plan improved by Dr. Franklin, and as a cylinder was not to be obtained in this part of the country, sent to the Doctor to procure one for him. His request was readily complied with by Franklin, who, when learning that it was for the son of his old friend, William Claggett, refused to accept the money sent for its purchase." Ross, *Historical Discourse*, p. 36.

2. Benedict, I. 500. In 1768, he "was elected Governor, by an overwhelming majority of nearly fifteen hundred." Guild, *Manning etc.* p. 66.

During the same year the church discussed the feasibility of forming an association of the churches with which it was in ecclesiastical fellowship. The members were all agreed that such an association would be desirable, but for some reason now unknown the idea was not realized. Why the church was not a constituent member of the Warren Association in 1767 is not clear. It may have looked with some jealousy upon those Baptist churches which arose out of the Separatist movement, and may have distrusted an association which was attempting to embrace such diverse elements.

The church has always believed that within proper limits the members had "the liberty of prophesying," that it was not only their right, but their duty also, to cultivate the gifts that were in them for the good of the church and the glory of Christ. Speaking of its earlier history, Mr. Callender says: (1) "In this church there were several persons able to speak to the edification of the rest; and I have been informed by tradition, that the greatest part of the inhabitants used to attend this worship, though the members in church fellowship were always but few." At this point in our narrative, we may give the remark made by Benedict in his history. Having brought his account of the church down to the year 1788, he adds: (2) "We have now followed the succession of pastors of this ancient community for about a century and a half, and, what is singular among our denomination in early times, of these nine pastors, all but Mr. Holmes (he means Mr. Peckham) were men of liberal education."

The next pastorate was to be a very important one, if for no other reason, because it was itself to span nearly a half century, comprising an entire period, as we have divided

1. *Historical Discourse*, p. 118.  
 2. *History*, edition of 1848, p. 466.

the history of the church. After the removal of Mr. Foster, the church turned to Swanzea and called MICHAEL EDDY to the pastoral office. He was born in Swanzea, Nov. 1, 1760, ordained in the same town in 1785, and called to the pastorate of this church, Aug. 10, 1789. Three years afterward, the church, without assigning any reason for the act, voted, in the words of the record, "to remove our standing from the Warren Association," and the church remained unassociated during the remainder of Mr. Eddy's long pastorate. In consequence of this action the influence of the church was curtailed and its history during that time obscured. Hitherto the records of the church had been kept by the successive pastors, but in 1794 one of the members was chosen Church Clerk. JOHN TILLINGHAST held the office until 1796, when JOHN LYNDON was appointed, who held it for many years. During Mr. Eddy's ministry the church was greatly built up numerically. Several very powerful and extensive revivals prevailed and large numbers were gathered into the church. The years 1806, 1808, 1814, 1816, 1820, and 1828, were all signalized by large accessions. In 1806, seventy-one were added to the church, in 1816, forty-nine, and in 1820, one hundred and sixteen.

But the church life did not always flow with an even current. There were occasional ripples on the surface, and once in a while concealed, though strong, counter currents. One or two troubles that arose were very annoying. One grew out of the sale by the pastor of a farm in Swanzea, containing "seventy acres, more or less." The purchaser, a Mr. Stebbens, charged that the measurement fell short, and came to Newport claiming restitution. While the church agreed that the elder had so far as appeared dealt honorably, a few thought that for the sake of peace and the good name of

the church, the man's claims should be acknowledged. The church, however, remaining firm, the few, instead of abiding by its decision, withdrew. The civil courts moreover, to which the matter had been referred, completely exonerated the elder, and vindicated his fair name.

Very near the beginning of the present century, a bass viol was for the first time admitted into the meeting house and used in the public service on the Lord's day. When its notes were heard preparing to lead the people in their songs of praise, one good brother jumped from his seat, looked around him in astonishment, and then deliberately taking his hat marched out. For a long time afterward this brother would absent himself during the singing, resuming his place, however, in season for the sermon. It is said that one of the deacons had charge of the service of song, and that all those who were opposed to the new instrument were allowed to withdraw.

In the year 1834 the First Baptist Society was incorporated, and very extensive alterations and improvements were made in the meeting house, the old square pews giving place to slips of modern dimensions. Two of the deacons had been accustomed to sit—it was their official seat—just under the pulpit in front of the congregation; the new arrangements disturbed this ancient custom. For many years the spirit of progress had been making innovations upon the habits of the worshippers. The old fashioned baskets into which the feet were placed to keep them warm, had been banished with the introduction of footstoves, and these in turn went into disuse when stoves were furnished to heat the air of the entire house; as stoves have since given way to furnaces and other more modern contrivances. And this is only a single illustration of many changes which were going

on apace. Footstoves, square pews and sounding board have all been displaced, and the viol has been succeeded by the more majestic organ. A Sunday School in connection with the church was organized in 1834, BENJAMIN H. WILBUR being the first Superintendent and continuing in office until 1839. At different times, as occasion demanded, deacons were chosen and ordained. One, JETHRO BRIGGS, in 1803; another, GEORGE TILLEY, in 1813; two, ABNER PECKHAM and ARNOLD BARKER, in 1822; and again two, BENJAMIN W. SMITH and PELEG SANFORD, in 1833.

Mr. Eddy possessed a large share of homely common sense; and, if less familiar with books than were most of his predecessors, he thoroughly understood human nature and knew the art of managing men. He was a man of large physical proportions, with a pleasant face, familiar with his people and welcomed to their homes. He was furnished with a horse and carriage with which he frequently visited his widely scattered flock. There is a portrait of him, now in the possession of a daughter living in the city, painted by our senior deacon while yet quite a young man, showing in the youthful artist certainly fine possibilities if he had not turned his attention in another direction. Mr. Eddy had a large place in the esteem and affections of his people.

But a cloud passed over the good man during his last years. He was suspected of unsoundness in his theology, of having a strong inclination toward Socinianism. And there were symptoms of uneasiness among his people. Circumstances, it must be confessed, seemed to justify the suspicion. Influences were at work which were telling with effect upon the church, which were leading the pastor and many of the members away from evangelical Christianity, away from the doctrinal position maintained when the church was organized



and by the successive generations of members since that time. A sermon by a very celebrated Socinian preacher who had been introduced into the pulpit, in which the death of Christ was thought to be disparaged and even held up to ridicule, was the occasion of deep grief to many of the best members of the church and subsequently of the withdrawal of several from its fellowship. For the sermon had revealed to them, they thought, a more serious defection on the part of the pastor than they had even supposed, and that many leading members had become inoculated with the fatal error. (1) The pastor was, however, becoming old and enfeebled. An assistant, JAMES A. MCKENZIE, was obtained in 1833, who remained two years and then identified himself with the Freewill Baptists. Full of years, Mr. Eddy was called hence June 3, 1835. He is still remembered with affection by many in the church. The older members who were baptized by him—the number is rapidly diminishing—fondly cherish his memory, and occasionally speak of “dear good Elder Eddy,” as they love to call him.

Besides the brothers already mentioned, there were several sisters whom we ought to name, who adorned this period and of whom the pastor could say they “labored with me in the gospel.” There was MARTHA CLARKE, better known perhaps as Patty Clarke, wife of Joseph Clarke, and who it is said was “a saint indeed”; and MARY TILLEY, or as more generally called at that time, Polly Tilley, wife

1. One of those who had removed his membership from this to the North church, was pleasantly accosted by the pastor a few days afterward with the inquiry, “Well, William, are they sound enough for you up there?” This same brother had a conversation with the gifted preacher mentioned above, and told him that “there was one passage, if no other, in the good Book that prevented him from receiving his doctrine; that passage was at the opening of John’s Gospel: ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,—and THE WORD WAS GOD.’” “Yes,” said the Doctor, “that verse has troubled me; other passages bearing on the doctrine of the Trinity I think I can explain, but this presents peculiar difficulties; now, however, I have an interpretation of it—it means one in office with God.” The brother remarked that “the New Testament writers have expressed themselves very strangely, if they did not intend to teach the doctrine of the deity of Christ, for their words certainly convey that meaning to simple minds.” This, we may add, is one of the truths received, with rare exceptions, by the entire body of believers from the very beginning of the Christian church.



of Thomas Tilley, "a very pious woman," who kept a small shop which became a kind of rendezvous for the good sisters of the church, not to gossip or to tattle, but to talk concerning the things of the kingdom; and MARY ROBBINS, wife of Asher Robbins, (1) "a mother in Israel," who spent much time in visiting the poor and speaking words of cheer to afflicted ones; and MARY CLARKE SHERMAN, mother of our brother Charles Sherman, who was at the time of her death in 1862 the oldest member of the church; and SUSAN BAKER HOWLAND, mother of Deacon Howland, who died in 1850. At a much later period than herself, her husband was baptized at the age of eighty years. The last two sisters were baptized by Dr. Foster, Mrs. Howland being his last candidate in Newport. And many others there were as worthy as these, whose names are written in heaven.

The next period, embracing the four remaining pastorates, we must treat more briefly. While Mr. Eddy was very feeble and drawing rapidly toward the close of his life, the church called to the pastoral office ARTHUR AMASA ROSS, who was born in Thomson, Conn., in 1791, and while yet quite young joined a Methodist church in his native town, where he early held meetings as a licensed preacher. While still in the town of his nativity he became a Baptist, and there in 1819 was ordained and began to preach. He entered upon his pastoral labors with this church Nov. 9, 1834, although the public installation services were not held until the 11th of the following March. In 1836 the church reunited with the Warren Association. The two hundredth anniversary of the settlement of the island was remembered,

1. "Hon. Asher Robbins, LL.D. He was born in Connecticut, and was graduated at Yale College in the year 1782. Soon after completing his collegiate course, he was elected a tutor under Manning, which office he held for eight years. From 1825 to 1839 he was an honored and useful member of the United States Senate. He died in Newport in 1845." Guild, *Manning and Brown University*, p. 329.

and the pastor, on the 4th of April, 1838, preached a bicentenary sermon. (1) During Mr. Ross's term of service, large accessions were made to the church every year. He closed his pastoral labors on the 1st of November, 1840, and after much successful toil upon other fields, died in Pawtucket, June 16, 1864. Mr. Ross had a vigorous intellect, and although deprived of educational advantages in his youth, a friend adds that "he was a severe student during all his early life,—yes, during all his life." He was positive in his convictions, and as a preacher somewhat eccentric. He preached vigorously the old doctrines, and gave no quarter to what he believed to be error. Those who had embraced "another gospel" were filled with consternation. He had wonderful success in winning souls. Extensive revivals marked his entire ministry of about fifty years. "He baptized over 1400 converts with his own hands, in the different places where he had served as pastor."

On the 2d of January, 1841, JOSEPH SMITH was invited to succeed Mr. Ross, and, the invitation having been accepted, commenced his labors on the 21st of February. Public installation services were held on Wednesday, the 24th of March, "in connection with a series of meetings for worship to begin on the preceding Tuesday evening." Mr. Smith was born in Hampstead, N. H., June 31, 1808, and, having previously studied a year (1831-32) at the Newton Theological Seminary, graduated at Brown University in the class of 1837, and the same year was ordained at Woonsocket, in this State. When he came to this church he found much

1. The records say: "Wednesday the fourth day of April 1838, being the day New Style answering to the twenty fourth day of March Old Style on which the Rev. John Callender preached his Century Sermon." etc. Of Mr. Ross's discourse, Benedict says: "This sermon embraces the civil and religious history of Rhode Island for two hundred years. Mr. Ross has given an account, somewhat in detail, of the calamitous and distressing events of the war of the Revolution; its dilapidations; the scenes of personal injury and violence to which many of the inhabitants were exposed while the Island was in possession of the British troops. This discourse, with notes and appendix, makes a volume of one hundred and sixty pages, and has afforded me essential aid in my compilations in this part of the State." *History*, edition of 1848, p. 467.

pastoral work requiring to be done. It was a weeding time in the church. The list of members was thoroughly examined, and the unworthy were stricken from the roll. Much labor was expended upon delinquents. There were nevertheless accessions in the meantime. A powerful revival brought into the church, during the years 1842 and 1843, more than one hundred and thirty new members. In May, 1842, "It was agreed that the pastor may hold church meetings out on the island for hearing religious experience and the reception of members, whenever he may think proper."

Great credit is due the pastor for his unwearied efforts to secure for the church a new meeting house, which was built on the old site, the former house having been sold and removed. The new house measured 62 by 72 feet, and was capable of seating about 1000 people. It was built at the moderate cost of \$10,000. As so often happens, all could not see alike in regard to the best way of accomplishing the great enterprise. Some were unable to appreciate the importance of it at all, and placed themselves in opposition. But the good work was notwithstanding carried forward to a successful issue. At ten o'clock, on the morning of May 13, 1846, the "new meeting house was dedicated to the worship of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." A sermon was preached on the occasion by the pastor from Psalm XLV. 6, 7. (1) The following year a hand book was prepared for the members, embracing the Church Covenant adopted in 1727, together with an appendix containing resolutions which had from time to time been adopted by the church. In the service of song the Psalmist displaced

1. During the erection of their new house the church worshipped in Clarke street, in the house where Dr. Stiles and then Dr. Patten had preached, and which is now owned by the Central Baptist church, though it has recently been so thoroughly remodelled as to be virtually a new house. The Central church was organized in 1847.

Winchell's edition of Watts. Mr. Smith resigned his pastorate Aug. 19, 1849, and after good work done elsewhere, though with constantly failing health, he died at North Oxford, Mass., April 26, 1866. He did for this church a noble service. From the impulse received through him, the church took an onward movement in almost every department of its activity. As a preacher he was close, searching, and eminently evangelical. He aimed to indoctrinate the members of his flock, and ground them in the teachings of Scripture.

He was succeeded by SAMUEL ADLAM, who was called to the pastoral office Oct. 14, 1849. He was born in Bristol, England, and had the privilege in his youth of listening to the eloquent Robert Hall and of looking upon the form of the incomparable Andrew Fuller. At the age of twenty-two he came to this country, and was soon after baptized into the First Baptist Church of Boston. November 3, 1824, he was ordained at West Dedham, and subsequently, in 1838, graduated at the Newton Theological Institution. The presence of my venerable predecessor with us to-day forbids my speaking of him and of his work, as would otherwise be proper. But I may be permitted to say that very large accessions were made to the church, especially during the years 1854 and 1858. The 7th of May, 1854, is still fresh in the memory of many of the members of the church, when nearly fifty persons received the right hand of fellowship; when "the house was filled to its utmost capacity, the silence like that of eternity; the candidates stretched across the house in front of the pulpit, and for some distance up each aisle." Fidelity to the record compels me to remark that about 1860 a difficulty arose in the church which continued long, and was the occasion of intense bitterness and alienation even between chief friends. Mention is now made of it as a matter of history, not to open

afresh the closing wounds. The hand of time and especially the grace of God are, I trust, obliterating even the scars. During Mr. Adlam's ministry all the wood-work in the interior of the meeting house was painted, and a new organ of singular sweetness was placed in the gallery. This church, together with nineteen others situated in the southern part of the State, in 1860 withdrew from the Warren Association for the purpose of forming a new body, to be known as the Narragansett Association. Mr. Adlam resigned his charge of the church June 27, 1864, but still finds his home among us.

The present pastor commenced his labors with the church March 12, 1865. The material changes which have since been made are, first, the remodelling of the vestry, removing the old furnace and substituting two, one on either side of the house, and transferring the platform from the north to the east side of the room, the seats being placed to correspond; and secondly, the purchasing of three adjoining estates and taking the buildings therefrom so as greatly to enlarge our meeting house lot, a much needed improvement; but only one of several others that should follow. In this connection mention should be made of the kindly offices of our brother FELIX PECKHAM, who bought the property and held it till the church could take it off his hands, and himself gave \$500 towards the purchase.

During this period, the period now continuing, we notice that changes of various kinds have been taking place, and that some real progress has been made. We think there has been a decided advance in the benevolence of the church, and some growth in knowledge of the word of God. At different times members have received the approbation of the church to exercise their gifts in the ministry of the Word. I have not, however, ascertained how many brethren have



been sent forth as preachers of the gospel. As occasion demanded, deacons have been elected. There was one chosen in 1837, BENJAMIN B. HOWLAND, (1) now and for many years our senior deacon, the first deacon in the church never formally ordained by the laying on of hands; two were elected in 1846, SAMUEL S. PECKHAM and BENJAMIN W. SMITH, the latter, having sometime before resigned, being now re-chosen; two also in 1857, STEPHEN S. ALBRO and SAMUEL EYLES. There were four elected in 1867, GILBERT TOMPKINS, a man of tender feelings yet decided convictions, and very helpful to his pastor, who died in 1868, also GEORGE M. HAZARD, THOMAS H. CLARKE and GEORGE NASON, and in 1874, ARA HILDRETH; the last four still serving the church.

What a throng of persons, members of the church during this period, whom we ourselves have known and loved, crowd the memory at this hour, whose names it would be a delight to mention. Some of these departed ones illustrated in a remarkable degree the grace of patience in the midst of sore physical infirmities, as our sister ANN TILLEY, wife of Thomas Tilley, who for more than ten years was unable to walk a single step; and our sister ELIZA F. EASTON, wife of James C. Easton, who during the prolonged period of thirty-five years was confined to her bed, unable even to move herself; yet habitually cheerful, inquiring with interest after the welfare of Zion, and ministering comfort indeed to those who called to comfort her. An invalid, too, for many years, was our brother F. AUGUSTUS PECKHAM, who, nevertheless,

1. For fifty consecutive years Mr. Howland was in the public service of his native town, both before and after its incorporation as a city, serving as Town and City and Probate Clerk, being elected for the fiftieth time in the spring of 1875. The city honored itself and a faithful public servant, by presenting to him the following year a heavy gold medal, which it had caused to be struck and suitably engraved at the United States mint in Philadelphia. The medal bears on its obverse the city seal, and on its reverse the following inscription: "THE CITY OF NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND, TO BENJAMIN B. HOWLAND: A TESTIMONIAL FOR FAITHFUL PUBLIC SERVICES TO NEWPORT DURING A PERIOD OF FIFTY YEARS. 1876."



overcoming almost insuperable difficulties, left numerous beautiful works of art, including several exquisite gems, which attest alike his genius and his persistent industry. JOHN F. CHASE was just graduated at college and the Law school, and was about entering upon his chosen profession with the dew of youth still upon him, when he was called from us; but he had given evidences of a rapidly maturing Christian character. Deeply interested as he was in his studies, he had become even more interested in the welfare of immortal souls. How many husbands and their wives does busy memory recall, who together through many years travelled the way of the Lord. There were the DENNISES, long among the most active members of the church; and the REMINGTONS, who at their death left a thousand dollars to the church as a token of love; and the STILLMANS, so fond of Bible study and of repeating "the old, old story"; and the PERRYS, who manifested till the last a deep interest in the prosperity of the church. But where shall I stop in my enumeration? Other names leap to the lips, as sacredly cherished; but time forbids that we pronounce them. All of these, and many others whom we fondly remember to-day, could with truth each one for himself adopt the words of the Psalmist: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."

In looking back and taking a general survey of the entire period over which we have now passed, extending through so many generations, we are more than ever impressed with the fact that dates, or statistics of any kind, or the enumeration of names, however long and imposing, but poorly

represent the real life and history of a church of Christ, of a company of God's people. That life, that history, is largely a hidden one, concealed from the eye of man and known only to him who sees in secret and will reward openly. That life lies within the region of motives, and consists of aspirations, of heart struggles, of conquests over self, of a controlling purpose to "live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." Nay more, that "life is hid with Christ in God." This inner, spiritual life will, however, with more or less exactness, appear in the outer life, the life that is seen by men. The inner life, that of earnest prayer, of intimate communion with the word of God, of intense desires after holiness and conformity to the divine will, must transcribe itself in the outer life, in the holy endeavor, the chaste conversation, the godly walk, the unwearied activity for Christ and for the good of men. But there may be correct deportment wholly dissociated from a renewed nature; an irreproachable life that does not have its root in sanctified affections. The outer life, pure and noble as it may be, is of intrinsic value only as it is a reflection of the inner, only as it springs from a regenerated heart, from a heart in sympathy with the mind and will of God. Hence the injunction of the wise man: "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." Upon the heart God looks in estimating men. He recognizes his saints wherever found, and in whatever garb. He remembers them when men have forgotten them. How many have lived, have fought the good fight, have struggled here below, have had their sorrows and their joys, and passed away from this church to their reward, of whom we know absolutely nothing save their names, and these are in many cases entirely gone. Their memory has perished from off the earth; but the covenant

keeping God remembers them, and their names are written in the Lamb's book of life. And even upon the earth their influence may still live and be perpetuated among men. It is this spiritual fruit, the holy life, the godly conversation, the humble faith, the joyful hope, the sweet obedience to the divine will, which the Lord seeks and which is pleasing in his sight. Ah! happy the man, though unknown to his fellows or entirely forgotten by them, that can lay such fruit as this at the feet of his Savior and King.

God estimates men, churches, communities, not by their ancestry, by the line of history they may be able to trace, by any achievement of others in the past, but by what they themselves are and have attempted to do for him and for the good of men. Every generation in this church has had to make its own record, its own history. Every individual member indeed has had to stand or fall according to his own acts. Alone must every one make answer to his God in the great day of final account. These truths have a special application to us. We cannot wear the laurels others may have won in the past. We all have our own work to do. The general character of a church may vary very much in the course of its history. Though enterprising and progressive in one period, it may be sluggish and stationary in another. The general character of a church at any given time is determined by the character of the members composing it at that time. This church will be, during our term of service, very much what we make it. If it is to be progressive we must be awake and active. While we may rejoice in the noble history of the church, and in all the grand achievements of the fathers, let us remember that their faithfulness to trusts reposed in them can in no way atone for remissness on our part, that we must be judged by the manner in which

we act our several parts in the drama of life. Nevertheless we are not, cannot be wholly dissociated from the past. It should, it will have its influence upon us. The character and example of the fathers is a legacy to us of inestimable value. May their exalted lives and heroic services become an incentive to us, an inspiration for the future. May we prove ourselves to be the worthy sons of noble sires. May the great truths which they so deeply loved and earnestly defended, and for the sake of which some of them so severely suffered, be firmly held by us and by us made known to others. Let us never forget the fundamental principles on which this church rests, and for the defence and advocacy of which she stands. Let us never be recreant to these principles. Let us hold them firmly and at the same time with a loving spirit. Let us learn to be severe with ourselves while charitable toward others. Let our convictions of truth and duty be as sharply defined and as narrow as the commands of Christ, while our sympathies and love are as catholic and broad as the human family.

We are constrained to mention, though but briefly, four of these principles. The first respects **THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST IN THE REALM OF RELIGIOUS FAITH**; it declares that he is Lord of the conscience and Head of his church; "that Jesus Christ is King in his own kingdom, and that no others have authority over his subjects, in the affairs of conscience and eternal salvation." His words do not come to his people as recommendations, but as commands; they are not of the nature of counsel, of advice, they are laws binding on the conscience. As King he requires and must receive the allegiance of all his subjects. His commands of whatever nature must be implicitly obeyed. His authority over the soul is absolute and must be acknowledged without question. To his church

he has given a body of laws sufficient for it through all its changeful history, whether it find its home in the sunny South or in the frozen North, whether the times be peaceful or such as try men's souls; for all times, whatever be its condition, when the church is petted and patronized by the world, and when the fires of persecution are lighted, Christ's laws are sufficient; needing to be neither abolished, nor modified, nor even suspended in any part. His laws, as he gave them, must continue in force till the end, must govern the church till its mission shall cease.

The second respects THE LIBERTY WHICH EVERY ONE MUST HAVE TO OBEY THIS CHRIST, THIS KING. This is but the converse of the last. Since Christ is Lord of the conscience, no civil power has the right to put foot within its realm. It must be left free in its actions toward its King, to obey or disobey him, to accept or reject him. Freedom from civil pains and penalties on account of matters of faith, of opinion, of thought, this was the doctrine for which our fathers contended so earnestly and successfully both in England, and at the settlement of this colony. It was just this freedom of the domain of conscience from the domination of the civil power. Not freedom from the obligations of law—Christ's law in the church and civil law in the state, nor from definite convictions of truth and duty. The freedom which they advocated, "soul liberty," as it was called, was sought not as an end, but as an indispensable condition of a higher good. They claimed it as their liberty, their right, to think, to choose, to study the Bible, God's word to them, and according to their own convictions, enlightened by Scripture, to organize themselves into churches.

The third principle respects THE SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE AS A RULE OF RELIGIOUS FAITH AND PRACTICE.



Herein is recorded the will of the King. Christ is the Lawgiver of his people, and the Bible is the law-book he has left for their guidance. No dictate of reason, no supposed supplementary revelation, no "inner light," can be put over against its plain teachings. No more can the utterances of "the church," or the traditions of "the fathers," be exalted to a place of co-ordinate authority. The voice of the fathers is to be heeded only as it harmonizes with this inspired oracle. The Scriptures are in a peculiar sense the word of God to his people. How they lost their supremacy in the church and in the world,—this forms one of the sad chapters in history. Taken from the hands of the people, crowded into the background, locked up in dungeons, and finally burned by the common executioner,—these were the successive steps by which the Bible was degraded from its supreme place of authority and power. "The Bible alone" as the rule of doctrine and duty was one of the battle cries of the Reformation in the sixteenth century, and of Puritanism in the seventeenth. During these periods Baptists made their voice heard. This was then one of their distinctive tenets, as it is still one of their articles of faith. From the Bible they learn the way of salvation, and the constitution of the Christian church; that Christ alone is the Savior of men; that personal faith unites to him and appropriates his work; that the church is composed of believers in Christ, or regenerate members; that baptism, symbol of the new birth, can be administered only to believers, not to infants, or unbelieving children; and that the immersion—nothing less and nothing else, the complete submergence expressing the completeness of the change symbolized, from death to life—the immersion in water of a believer making profession of his faith in Christ, is alone Christian baptism. And no custom



however honored, no tradition however hoary, can turn them from these plain teachings of the word. Nor will they for a moment give way to the plea of expediency. Let us be among the number of those who hide the word in their hearts that they may not sin against God.

The fourth principle respects the REGENERATED MATERIAL OF WHICH THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IS COMPOSED. Christ goes before the church and before the ordinances of the church. First a knowledge of Christ, and then a profession of that personal knowledge. One must know Christ before he can take on his name or assume the vows of discipleship. We do not enter the church in order to be saved, but being saved we enter the church by baptism according to the Lord's requirement. Then, having been baptized and admitted to membership in the church, we sit at the table of the Lord and, as he appointed, commemorate his death. Thus the order of the ordinances is made very plain both by the teaching of Scripture and by the symbolic meaning of the ordinances themselves. There is first the new birth, and then the new life. Having first received Christ Jesus the Lord, we then walk in him. Even so having symbolized the new birth, we may then with propriety set forth in symbol the continuance of this new life and its sustentation. Thus it is that the two ordinances, observed in their proper order, become eloquently expressive of great spiritual facts, a vivid representation of the central truth that from Christ crucified springs our new life, and that by the crucified and risen Christ this new life is sustained.

These are some of the principles inscribed on the banner which the fathers who organized this church unfurled to the breeze. The standard they held aloft so triumphantly at a time when it cost them something to be faithful to their con-

victions of duty, may we never be guilty of trailing in the dust. May we bear it forward with as brave a heart and as firm a hand. While, however, remaining true to our principles and loyal to our King, we love all that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and in truth, and bid them God speed in every good word and work; we can strike hands with them in every enterprise that does not compromise our allegiance to Christ. We are bound to reach out constantly toward the things that make for peace, and to seek the oneness of believers in the truth. That all believers may "arrive at the unity of the faith and of the true knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ," we will labor and pray. We must all become earnest students of the word God has given to instruct and guide us, and also imbued with the missionary spirit, the spirit manifested by the early disciples who went everywhere declaring the truth. We need not only to hold the principles, but to catch the spirit of the early confessors and martyrs who counted not their lives dear unto themselves, but went forward in the path of obedience, though bonds and afflictions awaited them.

Encouragement enough have we for our work, enough to stimulate all hearts, and quicken to intensest activity. First, in the simple command of the Lord, which expresses his will and pleasure; secondly, in the promises he has given of the ultimate triumph of his truth, and of the abundant rewards that shall be received by all those who continue faithful unto the end; and thirdly, in what has already been done, in the progress that truth has already made in the earth. What changes have been wrought since this church was first gathered. Previous to that time, Baptists, hunted and persecuted, had maintained a constant struggle for

existence. Bands of disciples in and about London held meetings in great secrecy, and doubtless observed the ordinances. For several years after the organization of this church, the number of Baptist churches in both England and America was very small, every attempt to organize outside of Rhode Island being met by the strong arm of civil power. In 1688, the American colonies embraced a population of only 200,000, and it is supposed there were but thirteen Baptist churches. A century later, in 1784, when the population of the country had increased to 3,300,000, there were 471 churches, 424 ministers and 35,101 members; the proportion being as one member to ninety-four inhabitants. In 1871, the population of the country was 38,555,283, and the number of Baptist churches 17,745, of ministers 10,818, of members 1,419,493; the proportion being as one member to twenty-seven inhabitants. In 1760, Dr. Ezra Stiles, of this city, estimated that in New England the Baptists were one twentieth as numerous as the Congregationalists. In 1864, a century later, they were eleven twentieths; and in all the Free States thirty-one twentieths. Baptists have had indeed a wonderful numerical growth. (1)

Still more wonderful, if possible, has been the growth of our principles. (2) Some of these are now the accepted tenets of Christendom. We may rejoice that all communions hold the doctrine of the separation of church from state, of liberty of thought and worship for all men; and also that all evangelical denominations hold, in theory at least, the doctrine of a regenerated church membership, and of the sufficiency of Scripture as a rule of faith and practice. The best biblical scholarship of the age goes still further, and endorses also our interpretation of Scripture as to the ordinances.

1. See *The Baptists in the United States*, by Geo. W. Anderson, D. D. pp. 7, 8, 28; also the Paper by Dr. Brooks in *The Missionary Jubilee*, pp. 303, 304.

2. Read *Progress of Baptist Principles in the last hundred years*, by Thomas F. Curtis.

Marked has been the advance during the last two hundred years in a critical knowledge of the Bible. And equally marked have been the concessions during this period to our own denominational views. It would be interesting and instructive to contrast the utterances upon our principles given at the time when Dr. Featley and good Richard Baxter wrote, with utterances at the present time.

At the risk of unduly prolonging these closing sentences, we are disposed to cite the testimony of a few scholars which should be known, but which may not be accessible, to all the members of this church. The great Neander, "father of modern church history," says (1) respecting the scriptural warrant for infant baptism: "As baptism was closely united with a conscious entrance on Christian communion, faith and baptism were always connected with one another; and thus it is in the highest degree probable that baptism was performed only in the instances where both could meet together, and that the practice of infant baptism was unknown at this period. We cannot infer the existence of infant baptism from the instance of the baptism of whole families, for the passage in 1 Cor. XVI. 15, shows the fallacy of such a conclusion, as from it appears that the whole family of Stephanas, who were baptized by Paul, consisted of adults. That not till so late a period as (at least *certainly* not earlier than) Irenaeus, a trace of infant baptism appears, and that it first became recognized as an apostolic tradition in the course of the third century, is evidence rather *against* than *for* the admission of its apostolic origin." On the form of the rite, he says: "The usual form of submersion at baptism practised by the Jews, was passed over to the Gentile Christians. Indeed, this form was the most suitable to signify that which Christ intended to render an object of

1. *History of the Planting and Training of the Christian Church*, edited by E. G. Robinson, D. D. pp. 161, 162.

contemplation by such a symbol ; the immersion of the whole man in the spirit of a new life."

In his learned Commentary on Romans, Dr. Lange, upon the passage in chapter VI. verse 3, "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ" etc., remarks, This "means strictly, to immerse into Christ—that is, into the fellowship of Christ." The American editor, Dr. Schaff, adds in a note on verse 4, "All commentators of note (except Stuart and Hodge) expressly admit or take it for granted that in this verse the ancient prevailing mode of baptism by immersion and emersion is implied, as giving additional force to the idea of the going down of the old and the rising up of the new man." Among the commentators cited by him as holding this opinion are the following : —Bloomfield : "There is a plain allusion to the ancient mode of baptism by immersion." Conybeare and Howson : "This passage cannot be understood, unless it be borne in mind that the primitive baptism was by immersion." Webster and Wilkinson : "Doubtless there is an allusion to immersion, as the usual mode of baptism, introduced to show that baptism symbolized also our spiritual resurrection." "Compare also Bengel, Ruckert, Tholuck, Meyer," Ebrard, and many others.

Dean Stanley, in his elegant Lectures on the history of the Eastern Church (page 117), states his conclusion respecting the original form of baptism and the manner of its corruption, in the following words : "There can be no question that the original form of baptism—the very meaning of the word—was complete immersion in the deep baptismal waters ; and that for at least four centuries, any other form was either unknown, or regarded, unless in the case of dangerous illness, as an exceptional, almost monstrous case. To this form the Eastern Church still rigidly adheres. . . . The



Latin Church, on the other hand. . . . has wholly altered the form. . . . and a few drops of water are now the Western substitute for the threefold plunge into the rushing rivers, or the wide baptisteries of the East."

These are a few of the testimonies, out of many others that might be cited, given by scholars of the highest eminence to the scripturalness of our views of the subjects and the mode of baptism. Very many, including several of the pastors of this church, have, because of convictions which a study of the word of God had fastened on their minds, severed their former ecclesiastical relations and become Baptists. Following the convictions which truth impressed upon them, Dr. Adoniram Judson and Dr. Horatio B. Hackett, each incomparable in his own department of toil, left their former friends and associates, and allied themselves with that people "everywhere spoken against." Our only question should be to know what Christ has commanded. Our duty is to render implicit obedience. He has spoken the words, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." May we comply with his requirements so cheerfully as at last to hear from his lips the welcome words, "Well done, good and faithful servants." For he is faithful to perform all he has promised. While upon earth there is constant change, and men come and go, and generations appear for a little time and then pass away, our God abides, and forever the same. The God of our fathers is our God, and will be the God of his people during the ages to come.













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